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CHAIRMAN WAXMAN STATEMENT ON EPA'S FINAL RULE ON LEAD RENOVATION, REPAIR, AND PAINTING

WASHINGTON, DC — Today Chairman Henry A. Waxman released the following statement in response to EPA's issuance of a final rule on lead renovation, repair, and painting:

"The new lead rule cuts too many corners. It won't provide the comprehensive protection for children that the law requires.

"There are multiple loopholes in the EPA rule. It allows dangerous renovation practices to continue in homes occupied by women of child-bearing age, homes where children visit, and homes that will be sold to young families. It uses an outdated standard to identify dangerous levels of lead paint dust, contrary to the advice of its scientific advisory committee. It does not require any credible testing to determine whether toxic lead dust remains after a renovation job. And the rule fails to ensure that the workers actually doing the work are adequately trained in safe practices and clean-up methods.

"Moreover, while EPA promises an 'extensive education and outreach campaign' to inform several hundred thousand small renovation businesses about these requirements, the Administration provides no funding to carry out its promise. Public education is costly, but the Administration's budget request does not ask for any additional funding to implement this rule and conduct the extensive outreach that is needed.

"More than 300,000 children in this country have elevated levels of lead in their bodies, and there is no known safe blood lead level. Lead damages the brain and central nervous system and can cause lifelong health problems, including behavioral problems, learning disabilities, lower intelligence, impaired hearing, hypertension, and male reproductive impairment. Exposure to this toxin is preventable, but EPA and other government agencies have failed to take the necessary action.

"To address the risks to children from renovations in old homes filled with lead paint, amendments to the Toxic Substances Control Act in 1992 required EPA to regulate dangerous renovation activities by 1996. Now, 12 years later, EPA has finally issued regulations. While the rule prohibits some of the most dangerous renovation practices in houses where children are living, it fails to fully protect children and pregnant women from exposures to toxic lead, which can ruin a child's life."